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May-June, 1961

... a city
of
CONTRASTS

Montgomery, Alabama

In 1917 the first Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, coming to inhabit the little stucco building on South Union Street in Montgomery,

found a parish of 113 Catholics with 105 children registered for school. The greater number of these children were not Catholics. In 1908

**Four Montgomery missionaries
with first communicants**



**Front
Cover:
Sr. John
Richard, S.B.
focusing on
Christ**



**Sr. Mary Oliver, S.B.S. visits a family
in a nearby project**

Rev. Father Rice, S.S.J. had come and started the parish with just five Catholics. Mother Katharine Drexel had helped him by purchasing the land and building the convent.

Arriving in the city, the Sisters found the little convent incomplete and they sought hospitality with the Sisters of Charity at St. Margaret Hospital. The trip from the Hospital, just a few blocks away, to the con-

vent gave them an opportunity to become familiar with the neighborhood. The unpaved streets and lanes that ran off Union Street were bordered by unpainted houses, just one or two room cabins. As the Sisters passed in the early morning they met their parishioners as they came to draw water from the pump or left their little home to go to work as domestics.

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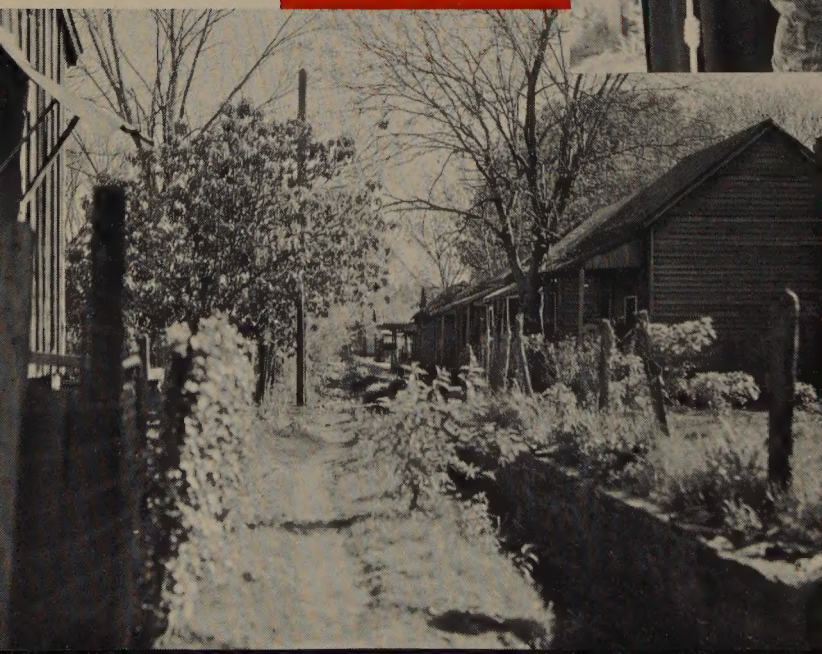


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... a city of
CONTRASTS
(cont'd)

Sr. M. Francita,
S.B.S. visits on
Maul's Lane



The Foy Family smile a welcome to the Sisters. Mrs. Foy is a graduate of Xavier University in New Orleans.

The white-domed Capitol building dominated the horizon to the east, while to the west the buildings of Alabama State College for Negroes were in sight. The setting was almost rural and most of the children coming to the school were desperately poor and pathetically eager to please their new teachers. St. John the Baptist School was the only Catholic school open for Negroes and the Sisters' next door neighbors, twelve teachers from New England who conducted a mission school, looked with suspicion on these Catholic Sisters.

Forty-four years later, an S.B.S. missionary in Montgomery is struck by the startling contrasts still presented by her surroundings. The stars and bars still fly above the



Dr. Richard Harris, an alumnus of Xavier University in New Orleans and a successful pharmacist, is here pictured with his family in their new, self-designed home in Montgomery.



... a city of CONTRASTS (cont'd)

gleaming white capitol. The traffic along White Street is brisk but the flash of automobiles along the asphalt street serves only to accentuate the unpaved lanes that intersect with it. The Chamber of Commerce urges industry to resettle in the New South but the New South presents a picture of progress alongside poverty, of prejudice versus the striving for equality. The unpainted houses still remain. The creaking of the common pump rings in the morning air, though some of the neighbors find the faucet in the school yard more convenient.

On the surface, then, things might seem unchanged. But the S.B.S. is aware of a changing picture. She is aware of the progress that is being made and it is because of this very progress that she is always beginning anew, that she is still a missionary. The unpainted houses shelter new people, but not a new generation . . . new people like Pet Belcher. Pet moved in last January. For her it is a step forward. The pathetically eager young people of yesterday have moved up and on. For most of them an education made it possible to establish themselves in other cities. However, some have remained in Montgomery and St. John the Baptist, which once claimed a dentist and a shop keeper as its only professional people, now numbers among its parishioners teachers, nurses, a successful pharmacist,

the secretary-treasurer of Alabama State College. In the school the percentage of Catholics has increased. Poverty has decreased. The smiling, friendly children are neatly dressed and well cared for. They are eager to learn and their parents, conscious of the need for education and aware of the shortcomings of Alabama's separate but unequal schools, are willing to make great sacrifices to send their children to a Catholic school.

During the past year the S.B.S. missionaries in Montgomery have been made very conscious of the vital challenge presented by their apostolate to Negro America. They lived through the anxious months of the Montgomery bus boycott. Situated as they are between the State Capitol and the Negro State College, they witnessed the student march on the State Capitol. To most Americans these issues have acquired a new and vital importance. For the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament in Montgomery, Alabama and in twenty other states, it is a familiar story. As daughters of Mother Katharine Drexel, who seventy years ago pioneered in this field, providing education, spiritual and material help for our Negro brothers in Christ, they know this is not a new challenge. It is simply the re-echoing of the plea of Christ: "That they all may be one, Father . . . that they all may be one in Us."



Miss Willa Lee Simpson,
secretary-treasurer of Ala-
bama State College, is a
parishioner of St. John the
Baptist Church in Mont-
gomery.



Mother M. James,
S.B.S. in the school
yard of St. John
the Baptist.



...focusing on the NOVITIATE

More than five thousand applicants answered the following Want Ad in the London Times regarding the Antarctic expedition led by Sir Ernest Shackleton in 1914.

Men wanted for hazardous journey — small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safe return doubtful. Honor and recognition in case of success.

These men were ready for sacrifice. No one forced them to offer their services. They wanted to; they were eager to give them.

At the same time in America, dedicated young women were also eager for sacrifice. In 1914 Mother Katharine Drexel's community, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People, had been in existence for twenty-three years. Little was known about this home missionary community but the challenge to serve Christ in a neglected minority had not gone unheeded. Each year since 1891 young women from the United States and abroad had answered the call to sacrifice and followed Mother Katharine as Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. In a spirit of joy they dedicated themselves to the service of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. With a vision, clarified by sacrifice, they loved and served Christ in the Indian and Negro children placed under their charge.

Today, in 1961, seventy years after the foundation of this Congregation, the challenge to sacrifice continues to be joyfully accepted by young missionaries-to-be.

The Novitiate of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament is located on the Motherhouse grounds in Cornwells Heights, Pa. (just three miles over the northeastern boundary of Phila-

IN SACRI

delphia.) From literally every state in the Union young women apply for training as home missionaries. On September 8th each year a new band of postulants begin their one year training period. The number of fifteen to twenty postulants each year is an assuring sign that the Holy Spirit is mindful of the needs of this Eucharistic apostolate with the American Negro and Indian.

After the postulancy, a two year period of Novitiate training prepares the missionaries-of-the-future for the sacrifices and the joys of service of Christ in others. These are young religious of a space conscious age whose willingness to sacrifice must be as unlimited as the space yet to be conquered by future Alan Shepards. The Press, radio and T.V., which for the few days of its news value, highlighted his feat, every day of the year carry items of pressing urgency of other areas to be conquered — areas in racial inequality. There are Martin Luther

CE



Joy in sacrifice (cont'd)



Kings and Charlayne Hunters and Hamilton Holmeses. They strive to overcome injustice and hatred and prejudice. The S.B.S. strive with them. There are Navahos and Pueblos and Sioux. They strive to overcome poverty and want and the denial of a citizen's rights to the first Americans. The S.B.S. are at their side.

In 1961 S.B.S. missionaries-in-the-making are to be involved in an up-to-date apostolate which will require great sacrifice and strong convictions. They face this challenge with joy. They want it. They are eager for it.

A period of further professional training in the Juniorate, following the taking of their first vows, helps to prepare them for an apostolate which today demands the best in educational, cultural, social and religious training. Then, at last, on the home mission field itself, theirs is the joy of fully living the Eucharistic life of complete dedication, the life of sacrifice which first prompted them to answer the call of Christ.





A luxury-minded world finds it hard to believe that joy can be found in sacrifice. Yet, today, in twenty-one different states, over five hundred Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament are experiencing this joy. In our Novitiate our novices and postulants are preparing for it . . . the life of joy in sacrifice. The Holy Spirit will continue to inspire others, too. Will you pray with the professed sisters and the novices and postulants that His inspiration will not go unheeded? The life of the Sister of the Blessed Sacrament offers sacrifice . . . but it promises JOY in sacrifice.



I am interested in the life of a Sister of the Blessed Sacrament. Please send me further information:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Zone _____ State _____

School or Place of Employment _____ Age _____

Address: MISSION FIELDS AT HOME
Red Lion and Knights Roads
Philadelphia 14, Pa.

"Are there really any Indians left on the reservations?"

"Yes, I have seen pictures, but I thought that was just made up for tourists."

We S.B.S. hear questions and comments like that when we travel about telling of our missionary apostolate. We try to tell the people of the many Indians on the reservations — the Sioux, the Pueblo, the Hopi, the Navaho — to name just a few of the many tribes. Regardless of their location, all the Indians seem to share the common heritage of poverty and hardship. The reservations set aside for the Indians hardly represent the most fertile land in any state.

Recently a national magazine described briefly what we see daily in the "low mountain" area of the Navaho reservation. Speaking of Navaho ancients who traveled to Washington to support tribal land claims, the news correspondent writes: "Their faces were grim and tight-lipped, lined with the troubles of their lifetime and the legacies of despair they inherited from their forefathers."

The missionary is witness to what is described as the "eternal, soul-searing poverty of the Navaho" but this tribe that numbered 85,000 at the last count is not ready to give up in despair. There is evidence that the work of the missionaries in Arizona is bearing fruit. While many Navahos are still illiterate, more and more children are being sent to school. This semi-nomadic tribe, that

for generations wandered the reservation looking for grazing land, has learned the value of community action and encourages a greater interest in national affairs and voting. The Navaho no longer passively gives in in the face of disaster. Thanks to the spread of education they increasingly take matters into their own hands. This is evidenced in the activity of the Tribal Council which directs tribal affairs and industry and publishes a weekly paper to keep the Navahos informed.

However, a day's travel through the "low mountain" area proves



The Dinjé



Mother Maria Concetta, S.B.S. visits a hogan in the "low mountain" area of the Navaho reservation.

that the age of old enemies, poverty and disease, are still rampant. Trachoma is common and tuberculosis is still many times higher than the national average. Inadequate housing and lack of running water make sanitation almost impossible. Everywhere the language barrier is a great obstacle to progress. The 25,000 square mile reservation of the Dinjé, the People, is a hard, frightening land with an average rainfall of only eight inches. Even the sheep, on which the Indian depends so much, have proved a hardship and an increase in the herd reduces the already meagre

grazing land so that the number of sheep has to be controlled. Even with major industrial expansion the land could not support more than half of the tribe. More and more people will have to leave the reservation and find their way in the mainstream of American life.

In order to do this young people will have to be prepared intellectually and spiritually to face the problem of life in large cities. Little ones have to be brought into school at an early age so that they can learn English. The children of the reservation must be given a good foundation so that they will be pre-



Navaho mother places baby on cradle board.

Sr. M. Conradine, S.B.S. comforts little Navaho boy.



pared to accept the opportunities for a higher education.

The S.B.S. missionaries have ever been aware of this need and since 1902 when Mother Katharine Drexel built St. Michael Boarding School in the heart of the Navaho reservation, young Navahos have been given an opportunity to acquire a Christian education preparing them for leadership. St. Michael's, now a boarding elementary and high school, is not the only center of S.B.S. activities on the reservation. In Houck, Arizona, Tegakwitha Indian Mission, also made possible through the generosity of Mother Katharine Drexel, has served the Navaho people for several decades.

Encouraged by the progress of the past and aware of the needs of the present the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament joyfully continue their service of Christ in the Dinjé.



The reservation is 25,000 square miles; the Navaho number 85,000.



Sr. M. Martin, S.B.S. chats with former students of St. Michael School who are now in the employ of the Navaho tribe at the tribal seat of government in Window Rock, Arizona.

Sr. Maria Espiritu, S.B.S. with some of the high school girls at St. Michael High School, conducted by the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament.



DAILY PRAYER . . .

Your daily prayer for God's blessing on the missionary work of the Sisters is the greatest thing you can do.

*we
need
you*

S.B.S. mission Co-op plan!

Over 500 Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament today are dedicated as home missionaries, serving Christ in the Indians and Negroes of America. But we Sisters cannot do the vast and varied activities of this apostolate unaided. We need YOU — you who are missionaries, too, by your Baptism. Your prayers, your donations — make you "missionaries behind the scenes." Your sacrifices make possible what the active missionaries do. Here are a few suggestions . . . specific ways, large and small by which you can aid the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament.

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Philadelphia 14, Pa.**